

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

TO THE

Chailey Rural District Council.

Gentlemen,—I now hand to you my annual report for the year ending December 31st, 1894, and beg again to express my regret at not being able to complete it at an earlier date.

I think on the whole it may be considered a satisfactory record, for though there may have been the usual amount of the commoner forms of sickness, it will be found that there has been far less of the more serious kinds of illness than occurred in the year 1893, in fact, in no previous 12 months during the past ten years has there been so few cases of infectious diseases as those returned for 1894, and this is the more remarkable when it is remembered how seriously the domestic water supply was affected by the long drought in the spring and summer of the previous year, necessitating in so many instances the use of very impure water, and even at the present time many of the deeper wells have not yet resumed their normal purity.

Under the Notification Diseases Act, I received ten certificates during the year. Five of these were for diphtheria, three for typhoid fever, and two for erysipilas—in comparison with 47 such certificates for the preceding year. Of the diphtheria cases, four occurred in Ringmer and one in Plumpton, and of the typhoid cases, two were from Ringmer and one from Hamsey. None of these were fatal cases. One death from whooping cough occurred in Wivelsfield, and an infant under two years of age died at Ditchling from diarrhoea. These two were the only deaths registered under the head of zymotic causes, in contrast with thirteen for the previous twelve months.

The death rate in the district for the past year is 12 per 1,000 of the population, as compared with 13 per 1,000 for the year 1893.

It is disappointing to find so large a proportion of deaths of infants under one year of age, and the more so from the fact that in my previous annual report I was able to state that the deaths at this early age were below the average for the previous ten years. On referring to the causes of these infantile deaths, it appears that the larger proportion occur at or soon after birth, whilst many are no doubt due to congenital weakness. It is remarkable that, whilst so many infants died under one year of age, there was only one registered as having died between the ages of one and five years, and two between five and 15 years. The three who died between one and five years were all Newick children.

On referring to Table A, under the heading of "Mortality from subjoined causes," it will be seen that the first 12 columns, including all the notifiable diseases, are blank, showing that no death had resulted from such causes, a circumstance unprecedented in the annals of death registration in this district. Of the other death causes 26 were from phthisis and other diseases of the respiratory organs, 10 from heart disease, and two from injuries, whilst 72 are comprised under "Other and unclassified diseases."

It will be seen that the number of deaths in the county asylum for the year was 101, being nine over the average for the preceding 10 years; 10 of these were returned as occurring from phthisis, eight from other pulmonary affections, seven from heart disease, whilst of the remaining 76 a large proportion, as usual, resulted from diseases of the brain.

On turning to Table B it is found that the number of births is considerably in excess of that for several years past—viz., 251, as compared with 201, 237, and 227 respectively for the three preceding years, and giving a birth-rate per 1,000 of a little over 27.

Of the ten cases of infectious disease for which notification certificates were sent, one, a case of typhoid fever, occurred at Hamsey early in January; this was clearly an imported case, as the patient, a married woman, who came on a visit to her friends from Maidstone, became poorly almost immediately after her arrival, and in a few days developed typhoid. The next case, one of diphtheria, occurred at the end of January, in the master's house of the Ringmer Board school. It will be remembered that at the end of the previous year two children in the same family had diphtheria, of whom one died, and as the drains on the school premises were found to be defective, they were all re-laid, and have since given no trouble. Four other diphtheria cases were reported to me—three from Ringmer and one from Plumpton—but in neither could any specific cause be assigned for their occurrence. The other two typhoid cases happened in Ringmer, in damp, low-lying cottages, in different localities, but they were of a mild type.

Whooping cough and measles were very prevalent during the summer in several parts of the district. In July the master of the Ringmer Board school reported to me that more than 50 children were absent from school

from one or other of these causes, and that fresh cases were happening every day. I consequently advised closing the school for three weeks, after which the epidemic soon subsided. The Newick infant Board school was also closed at the beginning of January, from a prevalence of whooping cough. These were the only occasions in which it was found necessary to close any of the schools in the district from epidemic causes.

Several complaints have again come to me from persons living in the neighbourhood of the Asylum-road, Haywards Heath, of bad smells and other nuisances in connection with Kent's cottages. I inspected these premises again on October 31st, and found what has before been so often complained of—sewage overflowing on the gardens and into the adjoining main road. Your inspector has given frequent and special attention to the emptying of these pits, but from the fact of their becoming filled after heavy rainfalls, and the means for emptying them not always being at hand, it is impossible to keep them at all times in a satisfactory state; in fact, from their proximity to so many houses, they are really at all times a danger, more or less, to the health of the immediate residents. It is much to be hoped that a suitable portion of the land may soon be acquired for the disposal of the sewage from these houses, and thus enable the district council to carry out the scheme, as already proposed, for draining this part of Wivelsfield parish.

Frequent complaints have also been made to me by several of the residents in Newick that nothing is being done to remedy the existing evils caused by the present imperfect manner in which the village is drained. It will be remembered that Sir S. Maryon Wilson, on acquiring Gold Bridge Farm, kindly offered a site there for the outfall and disposal of the sewage from the village, and that consequently plans for a scheme for this purpose were prepared by Mr. Hubert Powell, who on January 11th, 1894, attended at a large parish meeting and explained in detail the plans there produced, and the resolution which the meeting adopted was—"That this vestry meeting approves of the scheme produced by Mr. Powell, and recommends it to the Sanitary Authority." This desire of the parishioners, as implied by the resolution, that some better mode for draining the village should be adopted, has, I have reason to think, become stronger in the past twelve months. One reason for this is explained by the fact that the number of lodgers who have stayed in the village in the past two years has considerably lessened, the alleged cause being its unhealthy and badly drained condition.

I am sure I may be pardoned for again urging the necessity for some early action being taken with a view to improving the drainage of Newick village, as the inadequacy of the present system has for some time been generally acknowledged.

I would suggest that whatever scheme may be decided on that it be one which should include the efficient drainage of the whole village, and that it be so planned as to admit of additions being made to it as occasion may require.

Systematic inspections have been made in nearly every parish in the district, but the places more particularly requiring attention were the villages of Ringmer, Wivelsfield, Plumpton, and Newick. In Plumpton many of the new houses are of very imperfect construction; they are consequently damp and unhealthy, and the water supply in many parts is most unsatisfactory.

Mr. Walls, your inspector, reports to me that certificates for the occupation of 21 new houses have been granted in the past year, viz., five in Ditchling, two in Plumpton, eleven in Ringmer, one in Street, and two in Wivelsfield.

Nuisances for which he (Mr. Walls) has received notice were abated in the parishes of Chailey, Ditchling, Newick, and Ringmer, and especial attention given to the rearrangement of the drains at Ringmer Board school.

Disinfectants have been freely supplied in all cases where found necessary, and infected rooms were personally disinfected by the Inspector.

Eight names have been added to the list of persons registered under the Dairies, Cowsheds, and Milk Shops Order, and the whole of the premises occupied by these persons were at the end of the year reported to be in a satisfactory condition.

I remain, gentlemen,

Your obedient servant

RICHARD GRAVELY,

(Medical Officer of Health.

Newick, March 16th, 1895.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH
TO THE
CHAILEY UNION
RURAL SANITARY AUTHORITY.

Gentlemen,—My annual report, which I now forward to you for the year ending 31st of December last, will show, by a reference to the accompanying tables, that an unusual amount of infectious illness prevailed during that period, more particularly in the latter half of the year; in fact, the number of cases of this class more than doubled that for any preceding year since the "Notification of Diseases Act" was adopted, the chief diseases being scarlatina and diphtheria. Scarlatina, which had continued with us more or less up to the end of the previous year, still remained in the district, four cases having occurred in Chailey, eight in Ringmer, one in Hamsey, and one in the County Asylum; but, owing to the extremely mild form by which it has all along been characterised, no death has been recorded as occurring from scarlatina for the past seven years.

After comparative immunity from diphtheria for some years, a severe outbreak occurred in the autumn of last year, the larger number of cases happening in the parishes of Ringmer and Newick.

The first case notified to me from Ringmer was that of the infant schoolmistress at the Ringmer Board School. This was on October 22nd, and from that time till the 25th of December thirteen more cases were recorded, of which three proved fatal. No local cause could be found for this outbreak, but, occurring as it did simultaneously with the sudden appearance of the disease in London and many other parts of England, that, contagious as we know it is, in this instance it was at first started by atmospheric media, its spread afterwards being favoured by local insanitary conditions. On November 7th one of the schoolmaster's children failed with the disease at the Board School House, when the school was at once closed, and the whole system of drainage on the school premises thoroughly examined and put in order.

The parish of Newick was also visited by diphtheria in a very sudden and severe form, the first case, a fatal one, occurring on September 4th, and in three days four other children in different parts of the parish developed the disease, thus again favouring the idea that the infection was at first air-borne; in fact, few of the cases in either parish appeared to be caused by personal contact, for in many instances in which the disease visited large families one child only was attacked, the others all escaping, and this occurring in small crowded houses where the whole family were of necessity huddled together, and where any attempt at isolation could not be thought of. In this Newick epidemic it was found that in almost every instance impure water had for some time been drunk by the patients.

Two cases of diphtheria were notified from Barcombe village, but these were clearly imported cases, the mother and child (who were the sufferers) having just previously to sickening visited some friends at Crowborough where at the time diphtheria, in a malignant and fatal form, was prevailing. There were in the rest of the district one case in each of the parishes of Chailey, Streat, Wivelsfield, and Plumpton.

In looking for a cause for this unusual severity and general prevalence of diphtheria at the end of the last year, there is little doubt but that the general scarcity of pure water, caused by the long drought in the spring and summer months, played an important part, if not in originating, at least in predisposing to the development of the malady.

In all the homes in which diphtheria appeared your Inspector or myself closely examined the different premises, but in few instances, except where the water was bad, was there any very positive evidence found as a cause for its appearance. On the contrary, and this circumstance has frequently been observed in former outbreaks, diphtheria appeared at houses and in situations where it would be least looked for.

Whooping cough was present in the district, and prevailed pretty generally throughout the year, and five deaths are registered as being caused by it, viz., three in Barcombe, one in Chailey, and one in Wivelsfield, all being under five years of age.

Influenza was again epidemic in several parts of the district, and prevailed more or less during the whole 12 months, but, as has before been observed, became more severe and general towards the close of the year.

The number of births in the 12 months was 227, ten less than in the former year, giving a rate of 24 per 1,000 of the population. On referring to table A, it is satisfactory to find that the mortality amongst infants under one year of age is again low, for, though numbering four more than in the previous year, it is much below the average for the past ten years, which is about 23; and passing to the other extreme of age—those who died at 65 years and upwards—it is also found that an unusually small number have been registered, viz., 36, as compared with 50 and 81 respectively for the two preceding years; the largest number (43) being those who died between 25 and under 65 years of age.

With regard to the actual death causes, which are also indicated on table A, it will be seen that 12 were returned as resulting from diseases of the zymotic class, whereas four only were recorded under that head in the preceding

year, whilst those occurring from other and unclassified causes number 109, being eight in excess of that for 1892. The deaths from all causes in the County Asylum number 75 only; of these one was from whooping cough, 11 from phthisis, six from bronchitis, pneumonia, or pleurisy, six from heart disease, one from injury, and 50 from other causes.

The number of deaths in the district from all causes is found to be 121, excluding the 75 for the asylum. This is eight more for the district, and 43 less for the asylum than were returned for the previous twelve months, and results in a death-rate of 13 per 1,000 of the estimated population.

On referring to my journal I find that on February 7th your inspector and I visited a house on the Broyle, Ringmer, from whence a case of erysipelas was notified, and where the children had for some time past suffered from sore throat. It was found that the water used by the family was being polluted by sewage oozing into the well from a defective drain. This was at once remedied and the water soon became fit for use. Several other premises in Ringmer were at the same time inspected, and the condition of the village found to be satisfactory. During the past ten years a great many of the oldest and worst houses, and those situated, too, in the most unhealthy part, have been pulled down and replaced by other and well constructed buildings. In fact there is no village in the district in which so much has been done in this respect as in that of Ringmer. The plentiful supply of good water afforded by the public pump has also contributed largely to the comfort and better health of the villagers.

Systematic inspections of various parts of the district were made at different times, but only those cases mentioned below were considered of sufficient importance to call your attention to.

On September 2nd several houses in the north part of Newick village were inspected. The cesspool at Rose Cottage was found to be running over into the neighbouring gardens, and the well water impure. Other cesspools close by were found to be full, but not overflowing. They were all ordered to be emptied.

On September 4th cottages situated at the north of Wivelsfield parish were inspected. At Kent's cottages cesspools were found to be smelling very badly, though not at that time overflowing, and the water in three of the wells connected with these houses quite unfit to drink. Other cottages in this neighbourhood were also inspected, and found to be in fair order.

On the same day many of the houses in Ditchling village were visited. The pigsties used by Mr. Sclater, and of which complaints had often been made, were ordered to be removed, which was at once done. Several other premises were inspected at the same time.

In consequence of receiving a declaration from Inspector Relf (acting under the Contagious Diseases (Animals) Act), stating that anthrax had broken out amongst the herd of cows on Street Place Farm, in the occupation of General FitzHugh, I, on November 4th, visited the premises, and found that two cows had died (both suddenly). In the first animal that died no infectious cause was suspected, but in the second Mr. Stock, the veterinary surgeon, pronounced it to be anthrax. Three other cows were suspected, and at once isolated. By my request the whole of the milk was, for the time, destroyed. No other animal was attacked, and in a few days Mr. Stock gave it as his opinion that the cows were free from infection.

Your Inspector informs me that water for the supply of eleven new houses had been submitted to me for examination, viz., two in Ringmer, two in Westmeston, five in Newick, and two in Barcombe, all of which, after some failures, were certified as sufficiently pure for drinking purposes. Nine samples were examined after wells had been cleaned out and other alterations made, all in the end being satisfactory.

Disinfectants were supplied to many of the families in which infectious diseases had been present, and, where requested, Mr. Walls personally disinfected the rooms, bedding, clothing, &c.

Mr. Walls also states that nuisances have been abated in the parishes of Ditchling, Wivelsfield, Plumpton, and Newick, and that the number of persons registered under the Dairies and Cowsheds Order is slightly reduced since 1892, but that the whole of these premises are in a satisfactory condition.

A more effectual system of drainage than at present exists as regards two portions of your district, viz., the villages of Newick and the north part of Wivelsfield, has been under consideration, and in both instances parish meetings have been held, whereas it was decided that some steps should be taken with a view to ascertaining the best mode to be adopted for carrying out this object, but up to the end of the year no definite scheme in either case had been decided on.

I remain, gentlemen, your obedient servant,
RICHARD GRAVELY,
Medical Officer of Health.

Newick, March 2nd, 1894.

Rural Sanitary Authority.

Chailey Union.

R. Gravelly,

Medical Officer of Health.

Newick,

Lewes,

April 30 1895
Knigh's & Co. Printers

Dear Sir,

In accordance with
your request, by Circular, I
now herewith a Copy of my
Annual Report for the past
year - I also send one for
the previous year not being
that I had done so before -

Yours faithfully

Richard Gravelly

M. O. H.

The Librarian

B. M. A.

